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X-MEN 2099
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THE NEXT PHASE IN THE LIFE OF METALHEAD
DIRECT EDITION
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THE KEEWAZI NATION, OKLAHOMA.
SORRY TO PUT YOU IN THE MIDDLE OF ONE OF THE FREAKSHOW'S FIGHTS, LOU.
MAYBE I'M LOSING MY EDGE IN MY OLD AGE. I THOUGHT WE'D BE SAFE HERE. GUESS I WAS WRONG.
HOW'S EDDIE?
HARD TO TELL, TISHA, I'M JUST A G.P.--I'VE NO TRAINING IN MUTANT PHYSIOLOGY.
YOUR FRIEND LOST CONSCIOUSNESS WHEN THAT GLITTERSPIKE CREEP BLUDGEONED HIM WITH THAT ENERGY MACE.**
HE APPEARS TO HAVE SUSTAINED A CONCUSSION, BUT HIS METALLIC SKIN MAKES ITS SEVERITY DIFFICULT TO GAUGE.
** LAST ISSUE.--JOEY
AT LEAST HIS BREATHING SEEMS TO BE RETURNING TO NORMAL.
HE'S COMING AROUND.
MAMA HURRICANE? DOCTOR MINGFOOT? WHAT HAP...
...NOW I REMEMBER... ROSA...
WHERE'S ROSA?!?
SHE'S GONE, EDDIE--AFTER GLITTERSPIKE KNOCKED YOU OUT--

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"--HE GRABBED HER AND FLEW OFF TOWARDS THE HILLS"
STAN LEE PRESENTS:
SHADOWS AND LIGHT
ALEX!, LET ME GO! I'M NOT GOING TO LET YOU KIDNAP ME!
UGH! STOP IT, ROSA! DO YOU WANT ME TO DROP YOU?
I DON'T CARE. YOU'VE NO RIGHT--
I HAVE EVERY RIGHT. YOU'RE CARRYING MY CHILD.
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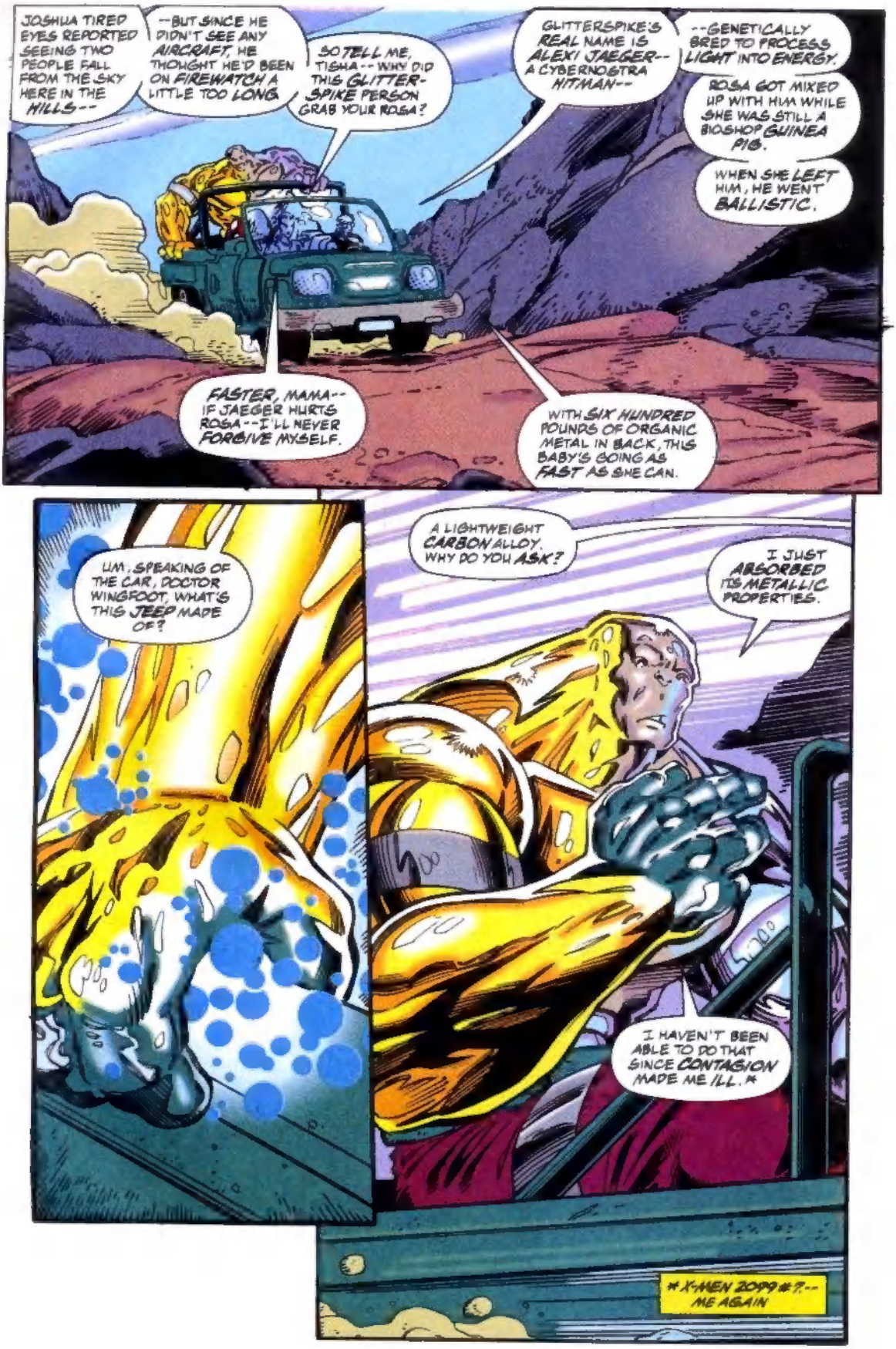
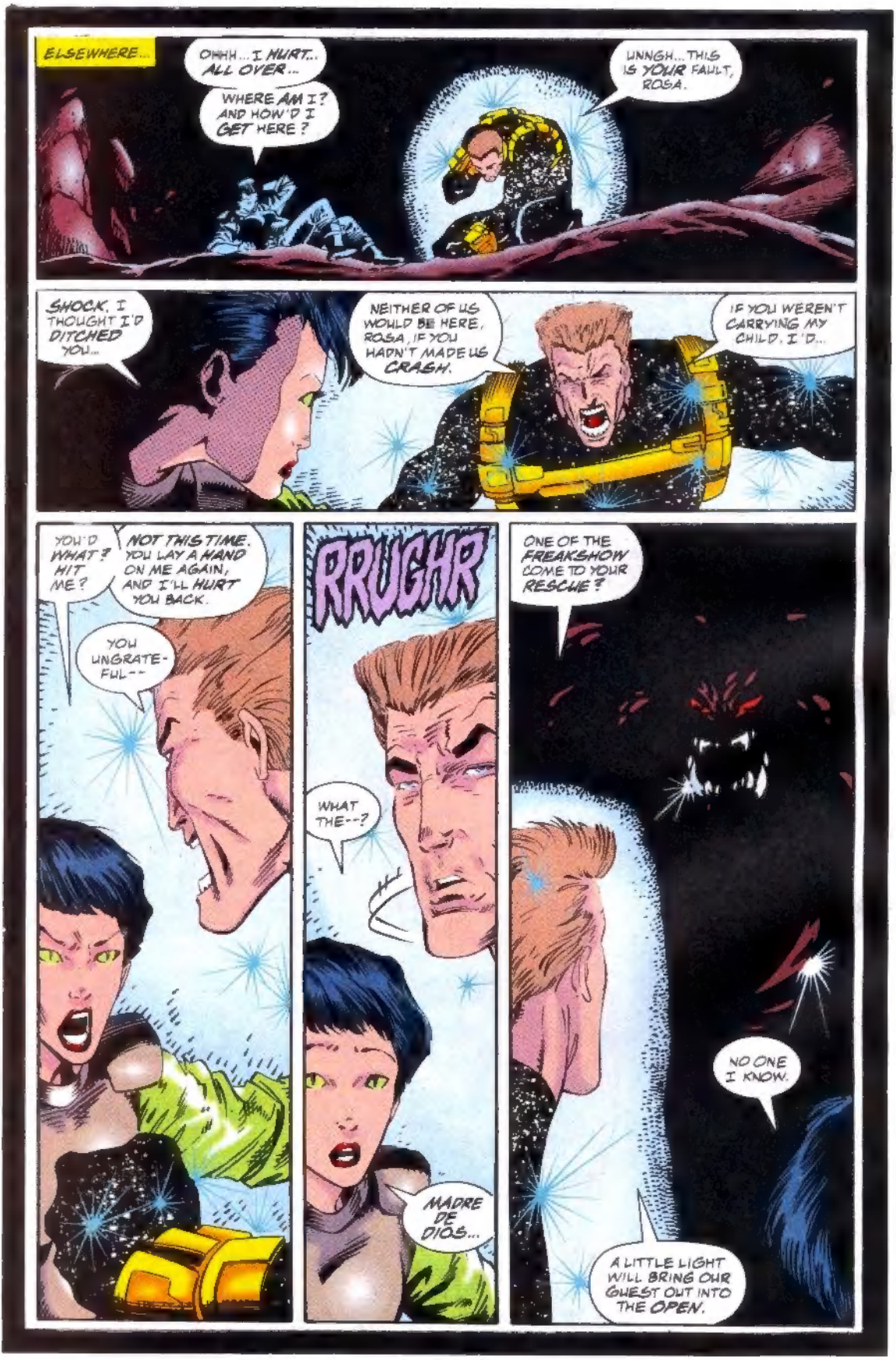
WHAT I DO, I DO IN THE BEST INTEREST OF YOU AND THE CHILD.
WE ARE GOING TO BE ONE BIG HAPPY FAMILY--
--WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT.
THE FREAKSHOW IS MY FAMILY, ALEXI--
--THEY CARE ABOUT ME MORE THAN YOU EVER DID.
MAMA HURRICANE'S COLLECTION OF BIOSHOP FAILURES CANNOT TAKE CARE OF YOU LIKE I CAN.
I'M NOT THE CONFUSED LITTLE GIRL THAT MISTOOK YOUR ABUSE FOR LOVE--
--I CAN PROTECT MYSELF, THANK YOU.
I MAY NOT HAVE THE LUMINESCENT ENERGY ADVANTAGE THE BIO-ENGINEERS GAVE YOU--
--BUT MY BODY CAN PRODUCE ENOUGH STATIC INTERFERENCE--
--TO MONKEY-WRENCH THE PROPULSION HARNESS YOU WEAR.
ROSA, ARE YOU CRAZY???

NO, I WAS CRAZY WHEN I LET YOU HIT ME AND THOUGHT IT MEANT YOU LOVED ME.
STUPID GIRL, YOU'VE JAMMED THE ANTI-GRAV UNIT!
WE'RE GOING TO FALL!
THAT WAS MY INTENTION.
WE'RE LOW ENOUGH THAT IF I CAN TWIST YOU AROUND--
--YOU'LL CUSHION THE--
--IMPACT!
OOOUFF!
WHUMP
UGHHH!
OHHH... THE GROUND CAME UP FASTER THAN I EXPECTED.
SORRY, LITTLE ONE, YOUR MOTHER DOESN'T WANT TO PUT YOU IN DANGER LIKE THIS--
--BUT WE'LL BOTH BE IN WORSE TROUBLE IF YOUR PSYCHO-DADDY GETS HIS HANDS ON US...

ROSA... YOU WITCH... DON'T MAKE ME COME AFTER...
DO THE WORLD A FAVOR AND DON'T GET UP, ALEX!
OH SWEET MADONNA, I'VE GOT TO GET AWAY FROM HERE...
...GET BACK TO TOWN...
...OR MAYBE I'LL JUST REST...
...FOR A LITTLE WHILE.
RRRURRAGH?


JOSHUA TIRED EYES REPORTED SEEING TWO PEOPLE FALL FROM THE SKY HERE IN THE HILLS--
--BUT SINCE HE DIDN'T SEE ANY AIRCRAFT, HE THOUGHT HE'D BEEN ON FIREWATCH A LITTLE TOO LONG.
SO TELL ME, TISHA-- WHY DID THIS GLITTER-SPIKE PERSON GRAB YOUR ROSA?
GLITTERSPIKE'S REAL NAME IS ALEXI JAEGER-- A CYBERNOSTRA HITMAN--
--GENETICALLY BRED TO PROCESS LIGHT INTO ENERGY.
ROSA GOT MIXED UP WITH HIM WHILE SHE WAS STILL A BIOSHOP GUINEA PIG.
WHEN SHE LEFT HIM, HE WENT BALLISTIC.
FASTER, MAMA-- IF JAEGER HURTS ROSA--I'LL NEVER FORGIVE MYSELF.
WITH SIX HUNDRED POUNDS OF ORGANIC METAL IN BACK, THIS BABY'S GOING AS FAST AS SHE CAN.
UM. SPEAKING OF THE CAR, DOCTOR WINGFOOT, WHAT'S THIS JEEP MADE OF?
A LIGHTWEIGHT CARBON ALLOY. WHY DO YOU ASK?
I JUST ABSORBED ITS METALLIC PROPERTIES.
I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO DO THAT SINCE CONTAGION MADE ME ILL.*
* X-MEN 2099 #7-- ME AGAIN


ELSEWHERE...
OHHH... I HURT... ALL OVER...
WHERE AM I? AND HOW'D I GET HERE?
UNNGH... THIS IS YOUR FAULT, ROSA.
SHOCK. I THOUGHT I'D DITCHED YOU...
NEITHER OF US WOULD BE HERE, ROSA, IF YOU HADN'T MADE US CRASH.
IF YOU WEREN'T CARRYING MY CHILD, I'D...
YOU'D WHAT? HIT ME?
NOT THIS TIME. YOU LAY A HAND ON ME AGAIN, AND I'LL HURT YOU BACK.
YOU UNGRATE-FUL--
RRUGHR
WHAT THE--?
MADRE DE DIOS...
ONE OF THE FREAKSHOW COME TO YOUR RESCUE?
NO ONE I KNOW.
A LITTLE LIGHT WILL BRING OUR GUEST OUT INTO THE OPEN.

RRRURRRGHHHH
SHOCK.
I'VE GOT TO APOLOGIZE TO DOMINIC. HE WAS RIGHT--
--THERE REALLY ARE MONSTERS IN THESE HILLS.
THE DOCTOR CALLED IT A SHADOW DANCER. SHE SAID IT WAS HARMLESS.
I HOPE SHE WAS RIGHT.
DOMINIC ENCOUNTERED THE SHADOW DANCER LAST ISSUE.

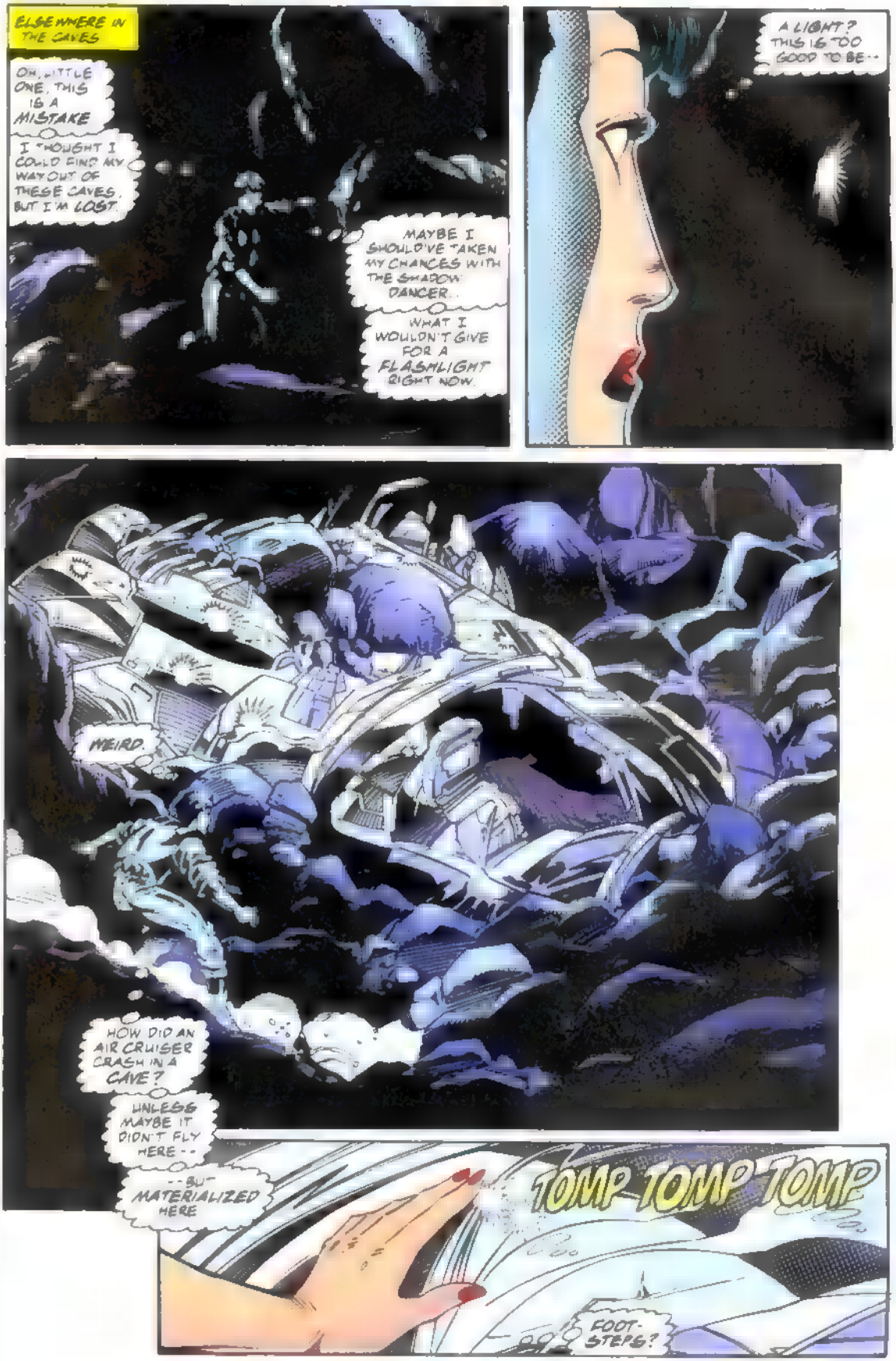
HARMLESS? YOU ARE NAIVE. LOOK AT ITS CLAWS AND TEETH. IT IS A CREATURE OF DESTRUCTION.
BETTER TO KILL IT BEFORE IT KILLS YOU.
IT VANISHED! HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE?
THAT BLAST SHOULD NOT HAVE DISINTEGRATED THE CREATURE!
GNNOORGH
UGHHH!
WHAM
MAYBE YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE ATTACKED THE DANCER, ALEX!--BUT YOU CAN'T HELP TICKING EVERYONE OFF.
ANYWAY, I'M GOING TO LET YOU WORK THINGS OUT ON YOUR OWN--
--WHILE I TRY TO FIND AN EXIT.

ZHAO'S COMPOUND, NEW MEXICO.
SHAKT!. YOU'VE BEEN AVOIDING ME
ONE MOMENT, TIMOTHY. I'M ADJUSTING THE BIO-RESTORATIVE'S AMINO BASE.
IF THESE CELL SAMPLES RESPOND TO THE RESTORATIVE--
IT MAY BE POSSIBLE TO REVERSE THE GENETIC DETERIORATION DESTROYING THE CHOSEN.
I DON'T CARE ABOUT ZHAO'S X-MEN KNOCKOFFS--
--I NEED TO KNOW WHERE YOU STAND WITH ME.
MY PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS AT REGENERATING THE DAMAGED TISSUE HAVE ALL FAILED.
CURRENTLY ALL I'VE BEEN ABLE TO DO IS SLOW THE DETERIORATION TO A CRAWL.
CELLULAR DETERIORATION RATE .005 ppm
ANOTHER FAILURE.
FORGET ABOUT THE SO CALLED CHOSEN--
THEY'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE.

I KNOW YOU LIKE PRETEND THAT XI'AN'S ABDICATION DIDN'T AFFECT YOU--
--BUT BOTH THAT HIS RECENT ALLIANCE WITH BRIMSTONE LOVE THEATRE OF PAIN MEANS TROUBLE.
THE THEATRE CAME AFTER US ONCE. THEY'RE NOT GOING TO FORGET ABOUT US.
IF WE'RE GOING TO BE PREPARED THEY RETURN--AND BELIEVE ME--THEY WILL COME BACK--
WE HAVE TO STAND TOGETHER.
I'M NOT GOING TO LET THE DREAM OF A BETTER LIFE FOR MUTANTS DIE BECAUSE YI'AN TURNED HIS BACK US.
SHAKTI, YOU BROUGHT THE X-MEN WHEN I A FLATLINE ON STREET.
DON'T ABANDON THE X-MEN NOW
TIMOTHY FITZGERALD, YOU HAVE CHANGED MUCH SINCE I LED TO THE GATHERING.
YOUR FEAR HAS REPLACED WITH PASSION AND RESOLVE.
WHO WOULD'VE GUESSED?
XI'AN.
VERY WELL. I WILL STAY.
BUT REALIZE THIS. YOU WILL HAVE TO WORK HARD FOR THE OTHERS TO ACCEPT YOUR LEADERSHIP.
CELLULAR DETERIORATION RATE .003ppm
I'LL MAKE THEM COME AROUND.

ANOTHER PART OF ZHAO'S COMPOUND.
KRYS, I'VE BEEN LOOKING ALL OVER FOR YOU.
I'VE BEEN HERE. I NEEDED TO BE ALONE.
YOU'RE CRYING.
I HADN'T CHECKED MY MESSAGES FOR A FEW WEEKS...
...WHEN I DID, I FOUND THIS.
YOUR BROTHER.
KRYS. ZAK. OUR FATHER DIED LAST NIGHT. HE WAS A GREAT MAN, AND HIS WORK CONTINUES.
THE FUNERAL WILL BE AT THE BROADWAY MOSQU ON FRIDAY THE SIXTEENTH.
DESPITE OUR DIFFERENCES, I THINK YOU SHOULD HERE.
I'M SORRY, KRYS... IF THERE'S ANYTHING I CAN--
NO. THERE'S NOTHING ANYONE CAN DO RIGHT NOW...
I'M GOING TO LEAVE IN AN HOUR FOR OAKLAND.
I HAVE TO SAY GOODBYE.

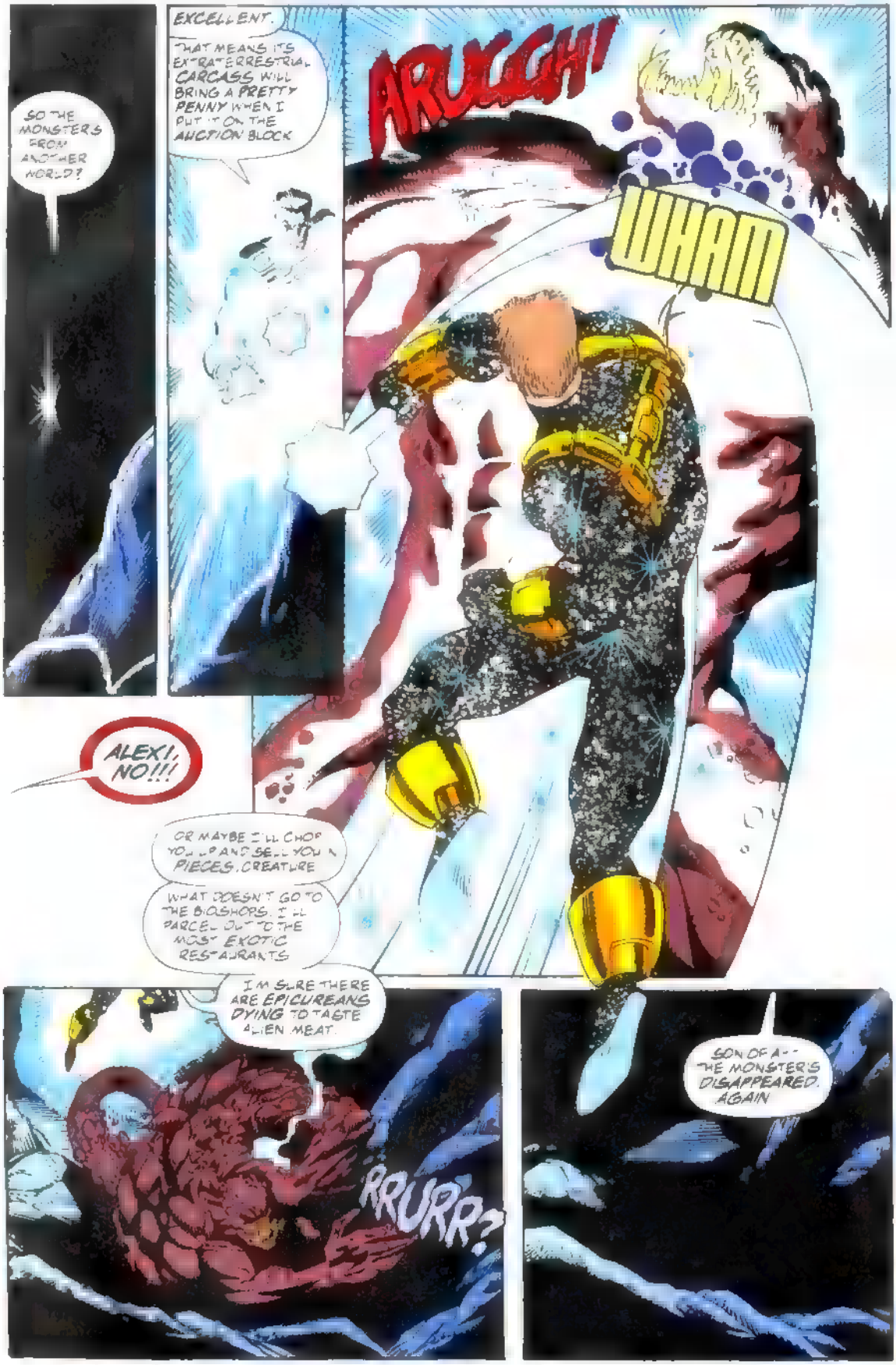
ROSA'S NERVOUS SYSTEM EMITS A MEASURABLE FREQUENCY OF ENERGY THAT YOU RECORDED WHEN YOU GAVE HER A PHYSICAL.
I SET THIS TRACKING DEVICE TO THAT FREQUENCY, AND IT LED HERE.
ONE QUESTION. IF SHE'S BEHIND THIS BOULDER--
--WHY IS THERE NO EVIDENCE THAT IT'S BEEN MOVED RECENTLY?
BARONG
BARONG
LISTEN. WHEN I HIT THE ROCK IT RESONATES AS IF THERE'S AN OPENING BEHIND IT.
UGGHHHFF!
WHEW.
TOLD YOU WE'D FIND SOMETHING.
I'VE NEVER HEARD ANYONE [redacted] THE TRIBE MENTION [redacted] STAIRWELL IN THE CAVES.
A STAIRCASE?
IF THESE STONES PREDATE THE KEEWAZI SETTLERS, THEY GO BACK A LONG TIME.
THESE [redacted]. WHOEVER CARVED THESE MAY HAVE BEEN SOMEWHAT LARGER THAN [redacted] ANCESTORS.


ELSEWHERE IN THE CAVES
OH, LITTLE ONE, THIS IS A MISTAKE
I THOUGHT I COULD FIND MY WAY OUT OF THESE CAVES, BUT I'M LOST.
MAYBE I SHOULD'VE TAKEN MY CHANCES WITH THE SHADOW DANCER.
WHAT I WOULDN'T GIVE FOR A FLASHLIGHT RIGHT NOW.
A LIGHT? THIS IS TOO GOOD TO BE--
WEIRD.
HOW DID AN AIR CRUISER CRASH IN A CAVE?
UNLESS MAYBE IT DIDN'T FLY HERE--
--BUT MATERIALIZED HERE
TOMP TOMP TOMP
FOOT-STEPS?

LIGHT--
--ALEX!--?
NO, ROSA. NOT ALEX!
DID HE HURT YOU?
NO THESE BRUISES ARE FROM STUMBLING AROUND IN THE DARK
'TIS GREAT TO SEE YOU. I THOUGHT I'D NEVER FIND MY WAY OUT.
WHAT'S THIS?
A PLANE WRECK. MAYBE IT'S A STARK/FUJIKAWA PROTO-TYPE.
I DON'T THINK SO. THAT CREW MEMBER'S DEFINITELY NOT ONE OF THEIR TEST PILOTS.
USED TO BE A LOT OF E.T. TRAFFIC OUT IN THE DESERT AND PLAINS STATES.
KINDA FIGURES A FEW OF THOSE INTERSTELLAR HOTRODDERS MIGHT'VE CRASHED AND BURNED.
IT LOOKS LIKE THE CREATURE THAT ALEX! WAS FIGHTING--
--EXCEPT THIS ONE'S DEAD.

RRROARRRR
SOUNDS LIKE SOMEONE'S NOT EXACTLY PLEASED WITH OUR PRESENCE.
GLITTER-SPIKE?
NO...
GRRRUGHR
OOOOH. I BET SOMEBODY WOKE UP ON THE WRONG SIDE OF THE BED.
ROSA, STAY BEHIND ME!
OKAY, BUCKY LET'S SEE IF YOU RECOGNIZE THE INTER-NATIONAL SIGN FOR PLASMA RIFLE.
NO, TISHA!
DON'T HURT HIM
I AM MUCH SMALLER THAN THAT THING GIVE ME ONE GOOD REASON TO PUT MY GUN DOWN.
MANY YEARS MY TRIBE HAS TOLD STORIES OF THE SHADOW DANCER, A CREATURE LIVING IN THESE HILLS.
SOME OF US HAVE FELT HIM FOLLOWING US, SEEN HIM OUT OF THE CORNERS OF OUR EYES--
--ONLY TO WATCH HIM VANISH AS WE TURNED TO LOOK DIRECTLY AT HIM.
THIS IS THE SHADOW DANCER.

HELLO, DANCER, REMEMBER ME? WE'VE PLAYED IN THE HILLS TOGETHER.
GRRARR
IT'S OKAY. IT'S OKAY. WE MEAN YOU NO HARM.
GNORFF?
NICE WORK, LOU. YOU'VE CALMED HIM.
I'VE SENSED HIS PRESENCE IN THESE HILLS SINCE I WAS A CHILD. I KNEW HE WASN'T A THREAT.
MAYBE HE THOUGHT WE'D DISTURB THE CRAFT
THE DANCER'S AN ALIEN?
HIS SHIP'S TRASHED. HIS PARTNER'S DEAD. HE MUST'VE BEEN STRANDED HERE FOR CENTURIES.
POBRECITO.


SO THE MONSTER'S FROM ANOTHER WORLD?
EXCELLENT.
THAT MEANS ITS EXTRATERRESTRIAL CARCASS WILL BRING A PRETTY PENNY WHEN I PUT IT ON THE AUCTION BLOCK
ARUUGH!
WHAM
ALEX!, NO!!!
OR MAYBE I'LL CHOP YOU UP AND SELL YOU IN PIECES, CREATURE
WHAT DOESN'T GO TO THE BIOSHOPS, I'LL PARCEL OUT TO THE MOST EXOTIC RESTAURANTS
I'M SURE THERE ARE EPICUREANS DYING TO TASTE ALIEN MEAT.
RRURR?
SON OF A-- THE MONSTER'S DISAPPEARED, AGAIN

DANCER'S GONE, BUT WE'RE STILL HERE, JAEGER.
PROBLEM WITH YOU LAB RATS IS YOU NEVER HAD A MATERNAL INFLUENCE TO TEACH YOU MANNERS.
OLD WOMAN, YOU MAY HAVE BEEN A DESERT FIGHTER ONCE--
--BUT YOUR DAY IS LONG PAST.
THONK
YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE DONE THAT, SPIKE.
SHOWING OFF FOR ROSA AGAIN, EH, EDDIE?
SHE'S NOT WORTH IT, MY FRIEND. SHE'LL ONLY BREAK YOUR TIN-PLATED HEART.
AND ARE YOU TRULY READY TO DIE FOR A LYING LITTLE--
SHUT UP, SPIKE!
I LEFT YOU EATING DUST ON THE INDIAN RESERVATION THE FIRST TIME WE MET.
WHAT MAKES YOU THINK I CAN'T HURT YOU AGAIN?
KLANG
THE ALIEN METAL OF THAT SHIP WAS DESIGNED TO WEATHER INTERSTELLAR TRAVEL.
AND SINCE MY MIMETIC ABILITIES HAVE RETURNED--
--THAT MAKES ME TOUGH ENOUGH TO WITHSTAND YOUR ENERGY MACE.

IT'S NOT OVER YET, MONSTER. YOU HAVEN'T SEEN THE LIMIT OF MY POWER.
NOT EVEN ALIEN METALLURGY WILL SAVE YOU FROM THE FULL FORCE OF--
--OOPS.
YOUR POWERS ARE PHOTOVOLTAIC, RIGHT? YOU NEED LIGHT TO CREATE ENERGY?
BASICALLY.
LOOKS LIKE YOUR BATTERY'S DEAD--
--AND THE LIGHTS ARE OUT!
THWOMP

LATER.
LIFT WITH YOUR LEGS.
I KNOW, MAMA.
URRGHHH...
WHOMMF
YOU THINK THE SHADOW DANCER WILL BE ABLE TO MOVE THAT ROCK IF HE NEEDS TO GET OUT?
I DON'T THINK THE DANCER WORRIES ABOUT ENTRANCES AND EXITS. YOU SAW HIM DISAPPEAR.
I THINK HE MOVES RIGHT THROUGH ROCK AND STONE.
I KNOW, I'VE NEVER MET AN ALIEN BEFORE.
NOT THAT YOU KNOW. REMIND ME TO TELL YOU ABOUT MY OLD SKRULL DRINKING BUDDY SOMETIME.
WHAT'S THE VERDICT, DOC?
YOU'RE LUCKY. THE BABY'S FINE--
--BUT PROMISE ME NO MORE SKY-DIVING UNTIL THE BABY'S BORN.
IT'S HARD TO KEEP ROSA OUT OF TROUBLE, DOC.
CAN WE SEDATE HER FOR THE NEXT FOUR AND A HALF MONTHS?
HAH.
HEY, EDDIE. YOU GOT PRETTY STEAMED AT ALEXI. THANKS.
YOU HAVE LOUSY TASTE IN MEN.
I'M TRYING TO CHANGE THAT--

"--AND LEAVE MY BAD HABITS BEHIND ME."
I'LL KILL HIM.
WHEN I GET OUT OF HERE, I'M GOING TO FIND THAT METALLIC FREAK AND--
BONK
AHHH, I HATE THE DARK.
GRRRR
OH SHOCK...
NEXT: HALLOWEEN JACK.